
The Socialist Party's Anti-War Manifesto and Peace Program: 1414 Socialists Take Stand Against War

Unsigned editorial in *The Northwest Worker* [Everett, WA], whole no. 238 (July 29, 1915), pg. 4. Editor of the *Northwest Worker* was Maynard Shipley.

Following the deplorable policy of the (so-called) Socialists of Europe, the National Committee of the Socialist Party of the USA, in session from May 9 to 14 [1915], inclusive, in Chicago, failed to take a sincere stand against war, as members of an *international* working class political party.

The *real* anti-war resolution and referendum of Local Everett No. 1, first published as an editorial in this paper, was turned down in committee. Comrade Kate Sadler later tried to bring the resolution before the convention, on a substitute motion, and received but little support. Politician Victor Berger moved that it be laid on the table. It was. At that moment, the Socialist Party of the United States lost its opportunity to take the moral and political leadership of the world, dating a sublime epoch in human history! Our committeemen had the chance to found a new era, making May 1915 the first month in the Year One of the Socialist Era — the beginning of a true civilization.

We do not mean to say that the taking of a firm stand against war by our National Committeemen last May would have been the beginning of the practical establishment of Socialism, either here or elsewhere. That is not our thought. But such an event would have marked a new epoch in history, a date to reckon from, for all time.

In May 1915, the (so-called) Socialists of the United States had the opportunity to say to the benighted world:

We, the Socialists of the United States, recognizing the international class interests of the workers, politically and industrially, and the antagonism between the interests of the capitalist class of the world and of the workers of the world, do hereby—

RESOLVE, That inasmuch as war today can be but the result of a conflict of economic interests between the capitalist exploiters of the workers of one country and the capitalist exploiters of some other political or geographical division of the peoples of the earth,—

We, as representatives of the workers of all nations, do here and now, as a fraction of the International Socialist Party, refuse to take any part in any wars consequent upon the continuance of capitalism, a murderous and moribund system to the overthrow of which we are pledged to exert our utmost endeavors. Be it further—

RESOLVED, That we hereby pledge ourselves to leave the fighting of capitalist class wars to those who vote for them; namely, to those who vote for the continuance of the economic system which breeds wars and makes them inevitable. Consistently with our principles of internationalism and our antagonism to the hellish capitalist system anywhere and everywhere, be it—

RESOLVED, That in case of war between the capitalists of the United States and the capitalists of some other profit-mongering nation, we, the Socialists of the United States, do hereby agree: that we shall allow the said capitalists to patriotically do all the fighting and dying for **their** country; and we do hereby offer this pledge to them, and to one another, as Socialists, that we will under no circumstances take up arms in defense of their country, nor will we bear arms in an aggressive move on the country of any of **their** fellow capitalists, of Europe or elsewhere, leaving the defense of all privately-owned land, buildings, factories, and machinery to their patriotic owners, who have “a legal right to do what they please with their own property.” Furthermore, be it—

RESOLVED, That in case we, the Socialists, are forced to take up arms, we do hereby agree to use said arms wholly in self-defense, and only against those who attack us personally to do us bodily harm, or to deprive us of liberty.

1414 Only of Us.

A resolution to the above effect, and some of it verbatim as here quoted, was passed by Local Everett No. 1 at its regular business meeting, Feb. 28, 1915. On March 20th, the Everett resolution was published in *The American Socialist*, calling for seconds, that it might go before the membership as a referendum, on the position of the Socialist Party of the United States. It was eventually seconded by locals representing 1414 members in good standing. And that was all.

So the Socialists of this country stand, as a party, ready to fight and die for the continuance of capitalism, instead of for its overthrow, while stupidly crying out against militarism and “recommending” disarmament!

The Peace Program.

Our Peace Program, now out for endorsement by referendum vote of the party membership, should be voted down as a piece of utopian folly. It is unworthy the pen even of a W.J. Bryan. It could well have been drafted by that arch-sentimentalist reformer and utopian, Jane Addams. It insults the intelligence of every real Socialist in the party.

The Socialist Party has no “peace program” other than *the overthrow of capitalism*. This is admitted by the authors of the “manifesto,” in saying:

The supreme duty of the hour is for us, the Socialists of all the world, to summon all labor forces of the world for an aggressive and uncompromising opposition to the whole capitalist system ... to strengthen the bonds of working class solidarity; to deepen the currents of conscious internationalism.

In the same paragraph, which characteristic inconsistency, or yellowness, the committee would have us oppose capitalism’s “most deadly fruits — militarism and war,” and “proclaim to the world a constructive program leading towards permanent peace.”

In one breath we are told that we are to eradicate the bad fruits by cutting down the tree (capitalism) that bears them; in the next we are

to oppose its “deadly fruits,” as such. One would think that the “deadly fruits” would perish with the tree, or live and ripen so long as the tree (capitalism) remained. Is the “constructive program” to be carried out *under capitalism, the cause of wars?* Are we to rid ourselves of the “deadly fruits” while the tree (capitalism) continues to flourish? Or are we to wage war on the “fruits” after there is no tree to bear them?

The “program” is such disgustingly bourgeois, reformistic utopianism that we have no patience to discuss it in detail.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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